

The Legacy Of Hanukkah

By Rabbi Ezra Boyarsky

Hanukkah - the Festival of Lights and Rededication - commemorates one of the most momentous events in Jewish and world history; it marks the very first struggle for religious freedom recorded in the annals of mankind.

Judah Maccabee's daring uprising against Antiochus' tyrannical regime and religious oppression, initially appeared to be but a rash, military suicidal escapade of a small, ill equipped, band of zealous guerrilla fighters doomed to an inevitable, crushing defeat at the hands of the overwhelming Greco-Syrian legions. But in defiance of all odds against them, the Maccabean resistance fighters, motivated by a blazing patriotism and an irrepressible faith in their cause, delivered a lightning blow to the enemy. This smashing victory not only restored Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel but it galvanized Jewish national and religious consciousness for generations to come, up and inclusive of our own times.

The historical impact of the Maccabean victory was so pervasive that it secured Jewish national independence for nearly two and a half centuries that followed. But in the light of events in our own time, it proved to be even more far reaching than anticipated; it permeated the collective Jewish psyche to the extent that after a 2,000-year-long political hiatus, the Maccabees' spiritual heirs of contemporary vintage brought Jewish history full circle in 1948 by founding the Third Jewish Commonwealth with all the trappings of an ultra modern state.

Timetable Of Terror

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free world.

October - LEV ELBERT of Kiev is officially warned that his Sabbath service is a ritual and he must obtain a permit. A year before, in prison, Elbert was also falsely accused of possessing drugs. Intensive Western protests forced the dropping of the charge.

November 1st - MIKHAIL ELMAN of Leningrad is taken to police station #50 and interrogated and beaten severely by the KGB. Two days later, secret police beat him badly again, saying, "We're fed up with Jews. We'll stop any religious activity. It's a matter of hours of freedom left for YAKOV GORODETSKY. We'll crush ELIMELECH RACHLIN." (The last two are also unofficial teachers). On the Sabbath, November 10th, the KGB seek to break into Elman's home during the brit milah (ritual circumcision) of his infant son.

October 30th - MIKHAIL VINAVER of Leningrad is summoned to the KGB, who accuse his wife EVGENIA of being part of a Jewish terror ring threatening to blow up the famed Hermitage Museum.

November 10th - Former prisoner EVGENY LEIN of Leningrad is badly beaten by the KGF after meeting with foreign tourists.

In recounting the Hanukkah episode, it should be remembered that the Greco-Syrian intruders were not the only foes with whom the Jewish freedom fighters were engaged in a life and death struggle. They were also locked in a fierce and relentless ideological battle with a growing internal enemy - the Hellenists - the precursors of latter day assimilationists - who opted for Grecian life-style and culture and posed an imminent threat to traditional Judaism. And it was these hellenizers who prodded and influenced Antiochus Epiphanes to undertake his persecution of Judaism with a series of harsh sanctions against religious practices. A similar despicable role was played in the

Israel: We Don't Object To Renewed U.S. - Iraq Ties

JERUSALEM (WNS) - Israel has no objections to the renewal of diplomatic relations between the United States and Iraq, announced in Washington recently. Foreign Ministry spokesman Avi Pazner told reporters here that Israel considered it the norm for the U.S. to maintain relations with all countries as long as this was not at Israel's expense.

A senior official here said Israel accepted the Reagan Administration's assurances that the resumption of relations with Baghdad will not be harmful to Israel's interests and that the U.S. has no intention of selling arms to Iraq.

Pazner, however, challenged the Administration's contention that Iraq no longer regards itself as a "front line state" in the Arab-Israeli conflict. He said Israel does not consider Iraq a moderate Arab state and suggested that Baghdad has not engaged in anti-Israel activities in recent years only because all of its resources are committed to its war with Iran which began in 1980.

Iraq broke relations with the U.S. following

the 1967 Six-Day War on grounds that the Israeli victory was achieved with American help. The restoration of relations was announced by a senior Administration official at the White House following a meeting of Iraqi Foreign Minister Tarik Aziz with President Reagan. Israeli sources said Israel has known for some time that this move was underway.

early post-revolutionary period in the Soviet Union by Jewish communists who beat the bushes to stamp out all traces of Jewish cultural and religious life in Russia...

Along with all the fanfare and partying that the Festival of Lights is celebrated by American Jews, it would be well for them, at this festive season, to take a hard look at the skyrocketing tempo of their own "Hellenization" process that is rapidly reaching devastating proportions.

But as relevant as the ancient period in Jewish history is to contemporary American Jewish experience, they are also markedly different. The avalanche of assimilation descending upon American Jews poses a far greater threat to the Jewish people than did the Hellenist during the Maccabean era. For all their misguided deviation from traditional Judaism, the Hellenists maintained a close bond with their people through their attachment to the land of Israel and its attendant national identity. However, in the absence of these two factors in the American Jewish equation, a danger sign points ominously to total disintegration.

Immediately following their victory on the battlefield, the Maccabees cleansed the desecrated Temple and kindled an improvised, temporary Menorah. The Menorah which symbolizes the light of the Torah, received top priority. Their legacy to all, but particularly to American Jews is clear; to counteract the scourge of assimilation, nothing short of a solid Torah education will prove effective for that is and always was the cutting edge of Jewish survival in the Lands of Dispersion.

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